

"Ah, yes," nodded the professor encouragingly, who was the victim of all the lads in the vicinity who had rareties or specimens to sell.

"Well, I've found something new."

"What is it now?" queried the professor.

"A funny rock with a 'scription."

"Inscription, you mean?"

"Yes, sir—prescription on it. Come on and I'll show it to you."

The erudite antiquary eagerly accompanied the boy. In the midst of a dense growth of underbrush the boy halted at a spot where a flat stone lay imbedded in the earth.

"See, there's marks on it," he submitted to his companion.

"I declare—so there is," assented the professor, adjusting his glasses. "Well!"

"Glyphics, aren't they?" inquired the boy.

"Hieroglyphics," corrected the professor. "Why, what is this?" and he carefully scrutinized three lines of letters, evidently scratched on the surface of the rock with some sharp pointed instrument. "S-p-i-d, ah! that sounds Gaelic. E-r-b-, an Arabic similtude to that. R-o-w-n—suggests the Aztec—at least archaic as to form. Um! spid-erb-rown. I must study this. Here, my boy, thanks for your valuable discovery," and the professor pressed a silver coin on the lad. About to make off, the latter, with a fresh stare at the mystic inscription, suddenly uttered a whoop of enlightenment.

"Oh, say!" he shouted, "I see what it is. It's a name. Look, read it right along and it says 'Spider Brown,' and off bolted the urchin. Rubbing his head thoughtfully the professor saw his hope of scientific discovery go to pieces.

"Ah-hum!" he cogitated, "Just the vagrant mark of some idle loiterer.

And, idle for the nonce, the professor casually poked with his cane about the side of the imbedded rock. The name "Spider Brown" caused him grope in his memory.

"Why," he broke out suddenly, "I remember now."

Yes, Spider Brown was suggestive, as the professor abruptly recalled. Six months previously the village bank had been broken into and some cash and a box of bonds secured. The police had traced the burglar. His name was Spider Brown, the crime was proved against him and he was sent to the penitentiary.

Later, the professor recollected, it became current news that while a part of the stolen money had been recovered, the box of bonds could not be found. Spider Brown had admitted that the bonds in questions had been a part of his plunder. He had, however, demanded a pardon and enough money to take him out of the community and a few thousands besides, as the price for turning up the missing securities.

The bank people had offered a liberal reward for the recovery of the bonds, but they were not willing to reward crime, and thus, as the professor now remarked, the situation stood.

All this ran through his mind as he carelessly prodded at the soil about the rock. Undoubtedly, while waiting to consummate the burglary or to hide after its commission, Spider Brown had scrawled his name on the rock.

"Oh, dear me!" exclaimed the professor, stepping back a trifle as the stone gave a tilt. His prodding had revealed the fact that there was loose dirt underneath it. And then he saw a glitter, a gleam. He pushed the stone aside.

A tin box! The tin box! It's clasp was wrenched off. He lifted it from its hiding place. He timidly pushed back the cover.

"Bonds!" he uttered, big-eyed and thoughtful. "Can it be possible that I have been fortunate enough to discover that missing property of the bank?"

The professor brushed the dirt from the box. He placed it under his